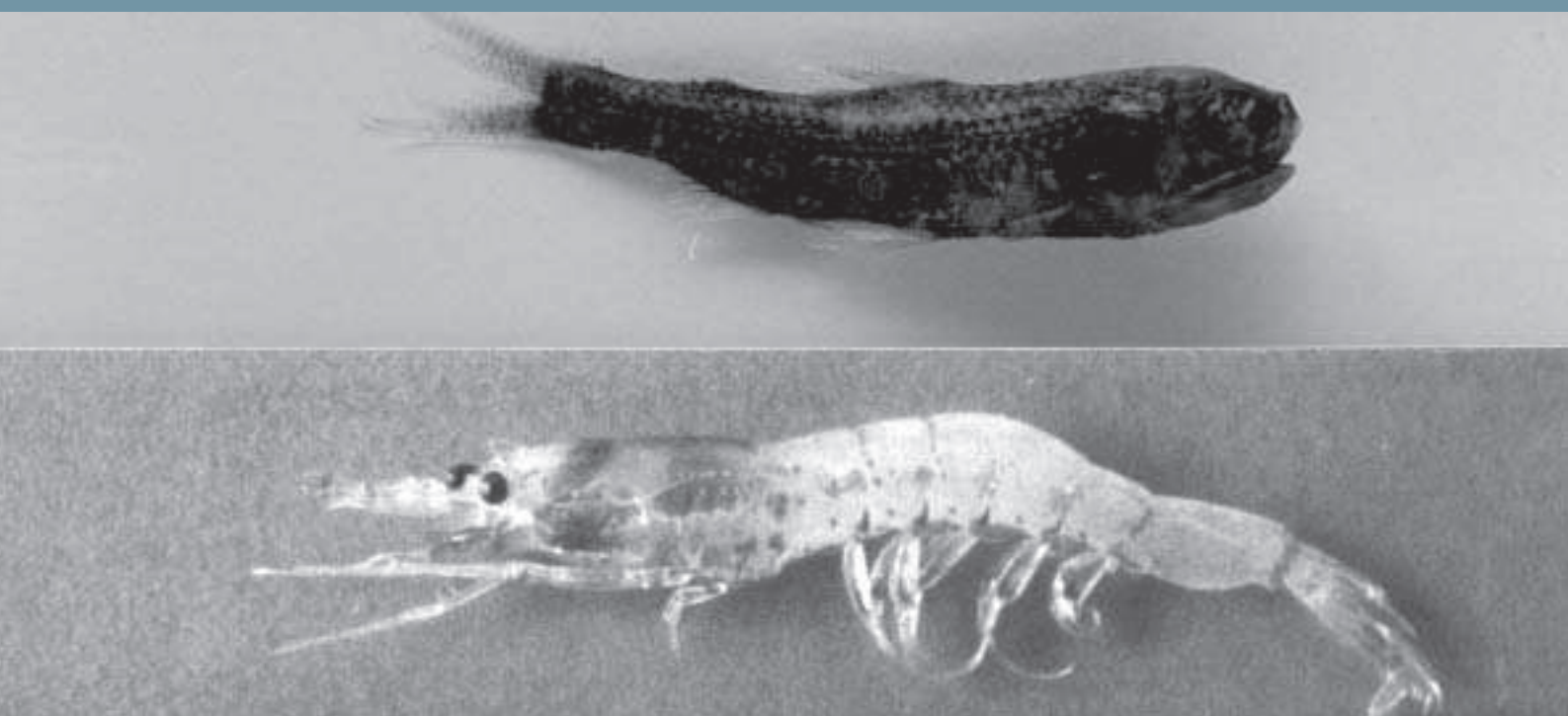




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Mid nineties had witnessed a sudden spurt in the crab export trade due to good demand in the foreign market. Hence a sizable number of fisherfolk diverted their fishing effort for crab fishery. Better catch of crabs urged the processors to adopt indigenous processing technology. Such a technology was encountered at Vellapatty, a fishing hamlet situated 15 km north of Tuticorin. Both Vellapatty and Tharuvaikulam, north of Tuticorin are well known for crab fishery along Tuticorin coast in Gulf of Mannar.

Form February 2003 onwards, the crabs procured are partially processed right at the landing centre and then transported to the processing plants situated far away from the landing centre for further processing. The crabs

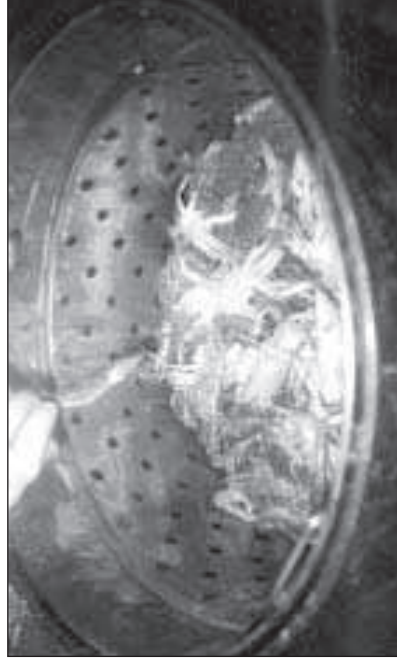


Fig. 1 Steam boiled crabs

are first sorted out species-wise and quality-wise. Undersized, moulted and spoiled crabs are discarded. Good quality crabs are selected, washed in fresh water and boiled in a specially designed drum with the help of gas stove. Each container contains two drums; the inner one with holes and the outer one without holes (Fig. 1). Crabs are boiled in steam for about 45 minutes, transferred to plastic trays, (20 kg/tray) spread loosely for cooling and placed in shelves (Fig. 2). The shelves are neatly covered by mosquito curtains to prevent contamination by houseflies and other insects. After cooling the crabs are transferred to insulated containers. Few pieces of broken ice are spread at the bottom. Then



Fig. 2 Cooling of crabs in plastic trays arranged in shelves

a polyethylene sheet is placed over the ice followed by the stocking of crabs which are finally covered by another polyethylene sheet with ice pieces. Then the lid of the container is closed tightly. Such containers are transported to processing plants where the crab meat is separated, processed further and packed in cartons for export.

In another method, the carapace and mouth parts of the crab are removed first and then the flesh is cleaned

by brush. Using scissors, the crab is cut in the mid region length wise into two pieces. The two halves are separated and cleaned in fresh water. The tips of the chelae and tips of the walking legs are removed, washed again, packed with ice in plastic containers and transported to the processing units for further processing.

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